

VZCZCXRO8022
RR RUEHRD
DE RUEHZP #1635 2781343
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 051343Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1264
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2630
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0343
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0612
RUEHBH/AMEMBASSY NASSAU 0088
RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 0407
RUEHRD/AMCONSUL MERIDA 0025

UNCLAS PANAMA 001635

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FOR STATE WHA/CEN - TELLO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: FFIS ETRD SENV

SUBJECT: PANAMA WANTS TO JOIN WECAFC; SUPPORTS USG POSITION ON SPINY LOBSTER FISHERIES

REF: STATE 131588

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. On September 26, 2007, EconOff delivered reftel talking points on spiny lobster fisheries to George Novey, Deputy Administrator of Panama's Aquatic Resources Authority (ARAP). Novey said Panama was not a member of the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC) but supported the USG positions. Novey said he would ask for USG support for Panama to join WECAFC as a Cooperating Non Member. Novey said the GOP is concerned about reefer ships carrying fuel in the Caribbean having to obtain fishing licenses. END SUMMARY.

GOP Supports USG Position; Wants to Join WECAFC

¶2. (U) On September 26, 2007, EconOff discussed reftel talking points with Novey. Novey said that while Panama was not a member of WECAFC, he was interested in attending the October 9-12 Cartagena meeting. Novey said he supports in principle the USG position, and that Panama is also seeking ways to protect spiny lobster breeding stock.

¶3. (U) On October 3, 2007, Ligia Castro de Doens, Administrator of Panama's Environmental Authority (ANAM) informed EconOff that ANAM was unaware of the meeting and that it would otherwise fall within the purview of ARAP. When informed of the reftel points, Castro expressed support for the USG position.

¶4. (U) Novey followed up with a letter seeking USG support for entry into WECAFC as a Cooperating Non Member (translation below).

¶5. (U) Novey said the GOP is also concerned about the requirement for Panamanian flagged reefer ships transporting oil to obtain fishing licenses for various Caribbean ports. He said several Panamanian flagged reefers have been denied entry into Caribbean ports for not having a fishing license. He said he believes the regulations requiring fishing licenses for ships which support fishing vessels is unfair and discriminatory against these reefers. Novey requested USG assistance in addressing the GOP's concerns on this issue within WECAFC.

Text of Letter Requesting USG Support

¶6. (U) Unofficial translation of letter received from ARAP on October 4, 2007:

Please accept are most cordial greetings and on your solicitation for your intervention with the goal of supporting Panama's entry as a Cooperating Non Member to the Western Central Atlantic Fisheries Commission (WECAFC), the request results from actual difficulties we are confronting with respect to Panamanian flagged vessels who visit ports covered by this commission.

Also, we would like to participate in the biannual meeting which will be held during 2007 of this year.

Without any other matter, I remain attentively,
Reynaldo Perez Guardia
General Manager

¶7. (U) Posts requests Department's guidance in response to the GOP's request for support on WECAFC membership and the reefer issue.

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